THE LANDSCAPES OF COROT

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To Lockett Thomson
with Fatherly affection
from D. Carol Thomson

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COROT'S PLACE IN LANDSCAPE ART

THE art of Corot, especially in its later aspects, possesses the almost indefinable charms of poetry, sweetness and light, which only the greatest artists have been able to express. In landscape painting no other master has revealed the same exquisite sense of the calm poesy of a summer evening or peaceful afternoon. In this regard Corot reigns almost without a rival. The great artists who, at various times, have chosen landscapes for their chief study—Hobbema, Ruysdael and Claude, with Crome, Constable and Turner, in England—have achieved their high positions in the world of art by different ways and with other results.

Of these masters, Turner alone is the one whose later landscapes are most nearly allied to Corot's, and however different may be their author's method of work, a detailed comparison of their pictures will reveal the similarity of many of their inspirations. In both may be found the same rendering of landscape interpreted by poetic grace and half-suggestive mystery; the same atmosphere enveloping the composition of their pictures. Besides, the life-histories of the artists might also be compared; the one born in the centre of Paris, and becoming the greatest landscape painter of his country, the other in the heart of London, and reaching in time to the same status amongst his own people.

It may be admitted, but with diffidence, that it is not granted to everyone to be able to appreciate the art of Corot at the first glance. It is true that a measure of artistic education is an advantage in such appreciation: yet this is not absolutely essential. Many of the greatest admirers of the painter, who have themselves received the highest possible pleasure from the consideration of his works, have been those to whom circumstances have denied the gift of expressing themselves in drawing or in painting. While it must be said that there is a distinct advantage to a connoisseur in being able to use his own pencil, it is, I repeat, by no means necessary. The better trained person will naturally be better able to appreciate the technical qualities of the artistic work; but to judge of the higher power of Corot's pictures, their poetic interpretation, their power to inspire and to charm, technical training is, perhaps happily, of little direct advantage.

With Corot the means of expression employed are so hidden, the arrangement of his compositions, while apparently so easy, are so subtle, and the tone and colouring so mysterious, that the advantage may even be with the technically untrained, if they are the spiritually minded. For Corot's highest achievements are like dreams blown on to canvas, revealing the mind of the artist without the restriction of the painter; like the whispering of zephyrs amidst the evening branches, when the spirit of the woods is felt rather than seen; like the inspiration of the poet when he has altogether left mundane matters behind and below.

The appeal of the landscape art of Corot remains as insistent and successful with the whole artistic community in this, the second decade of the twentieth

century, as when it revealed itself to a certain number of choice spirits long before the end of the nineteenth. The artist died in 1875, and until that date, or only a little earlier, it required a certain kind of moral courage, supplemented by a fair acquaintance with artistic tendencies, to be able to take a stand beside the pictures of the men who are known now as the Barbizon School of Painters.

Corot painted the trees in a way, as he used to say himself, "that the birds may easily pass through"; the leafy branches are seldom so thickly crowded together that the birds of the forest may not pierce their way in. The leaves of the trees he painted shimmer and rustle in the gently moving air, or they rest placidly in the half-distance, never revealing themselves leaf by leaf, as to the eye of a Pre-Raphaelite, but only hinting at their existence, and announcing themselves without, as it were, knocking at the door of the imagination.

The poetry of the tree and the shrub, the lake and the pool, is the quality which Corot has made supremely his own; and to the admirer nothing is more charming, nothing more delightful, nothing more moving and more satisfying than these when decorated by the spirit of the master and revealed by the acceptance of the willing disciple. The intellectual pleasure which is experienced in the examination of a landscape by Corot is, after all, best understood by those who, out of full knowledge, have entered into the real delights of Nature in her serenest and quietest moods.

A landscape by Corot is by no means a mere transcript of a scene, such as a photograph would present, or a realist of the most severe order would portray. All the best that is in art is original through interpretation, and not by means of imitation. Corot's later landscapes are almost entirely the product of a poetic spirit, thoroughly imbued with all the varying tones of Nature, which, taking the general aspect of the scene in question, has based thereon a beautiful picture. No idea of a portrait of a place has been considered by the artist, no topographical view has been even remotely desired, and therefore no attempt has been made to represent the mere outward appearance of the situation. All the endeavour has been to create a lovely landscape, taking as a theme the recollection of all the charms of the locality and concentrating it, as in a beautiful vision, upon one single canvas.

COROT NOT A REALIST

This also was Turner's method in his later pictures. Corot in France developed sympathetically along similar lines, but mostly with a different character of subject. Although very often, and in fact usually, he introduced water into his pictures, Corot never painted the sea; while Turner's greatest achievements culminated in such wonderful arrangements as *Rockets and Blue Lights* and similar pictures from his inspiring brush.

It is also to be noted that Corot did not put forth any endeavour to represent the near foreground in his landscapes. In a number there are acceptable indications of plants and flowers in the front plan, but none of these are botanically realised. In fact Corot ignored the nearer parts of the scene and de-

COROT AT WORK

liberately began his foreground far off. Mr. George Moore in his "Modern Painting" tells the story of how he found Corot at work a few years before his death:—"I only saw Corot once. It was in some woods near Paris, where I had gone to paint, and I came across the old gentleman unexpectedly, seated in front of his easel in a pleasant glade. After admiring his work I ventured to say: 'Master, what you are doing is lovely, but I cannot find your composition in the landscape before us.' He said: 'My foreground is a long way ahead,' and sure enough, nearly two hundred yards away his picture rose out of the dimness of the dell stretching a little beyond the vista into the meadow."

But it would be quite useless for a beginner to try to paint in this way, it is only after many years' experience in technical production, added to an ability to make poetic selection without effort, that such results are possible; and this we shall discuss a little later.

The earlier works by Corot are not introduced here at all. Many notable connoisseurs, as we shall see further on, consider that these show, from the earliest period, the poetic tendency of the painter. Figures by Corot, especially of the earlier period, have also secured the praises of many influential collectors. All these, however, we omit from the present work, having chosen, and with some deliberation, to draw attention only to the latest phase of Corot's painting. This is the phase which has rendered him remarkable in the world of art; the phase wherein he differs from every other landscape painter of our own, or of former time; and the phase which may safely be said to be the most likely to remain interesting to lovers of pictures; and this because of its beauty, its individuality, and its power to satisfy and give enjoyment.

While there is certainly much being written concerning the advanced men of the Impressionist School, with abundant discussion thereon in the studios and clubs, it is equally certain that these painters have not, in any degree, reached the hearths and homes of the ordinary art lover. Here and there, no doubt, one can find a violent disciple of the extremists, who does not heed the personal discomfort in his rooms rendered by the hanging of pictures, whose sense of charm has not yet been generally accepted. But when to-day an ardent lover of the Arts seeks to decorate his own home, he requires something which soothes and quietens his harassed mind; which renders with charm the varying moods of Nature; and something especially which conveys a sense of repose and rest. Any work which startles and irritates may obtain entrance to a real sanctum for a time, but unless it possesses exceptional artistic merit, it will very soon be banished.

It is this subtle sense of repose expressed through the more delicate tones and colours; in the poetic painting of a sunset or sunrise; in the romantic rendering of a lake or rivulet; in a composition such as conceals itself from too easy acquaintance, that the greatness of Corot's art is found displayed. Not

in a glance or in a few minutes' study, nor even in a good half-hour's searching, can the best qualities of the master, Corot, be found; such qualities as raise him far above the ordinary artist, and place him on the level of the greatest landscape painters the world has ever seen. His art in its highest powers is not to be lightly approached, as thereby much of its greatness will be missed or never realised at all. His finest utterances require serious consideration, and this consideration will be more than repaid to the earnest student. Corot's eminence resembles the aloofness of the great mountain top which requires special measures to conquer and to understand.

In order to test these qualities, let the reader take one of the reproductions from this publication and set it up where it can be observed again and again, and looked at carefully, both close at hand, and across the room. Any of the plates will answer the purpose, but, obviously, each person should make a trial with the picture which is found personally most attractive.

It is this difficulty in appreciating the art of Corot which left his works for so many years unappreciated. A certain intimate acquaintance with his pictures is necessary before their acceptance can be complete; and even now we are still, as it were, only at the beginning of the appreciation of his works, and it is likely that fifty years hence they will be still better understood and appreciated than they are even at the present.

COROT'S PICTURES IN PUBLIC GALLERIES

Except in Paris there are still only a few pictures by Corot which have found their way into the great Galleries of the World. As we shall presently show, there is a noble series of his canvases in the most appropriate place for them, the Louvre. This series comprises about fifty of his works, embracing over a dozen of his greatest pictures. In the English National Gallery there are half a dozen, of which, however, only two or three are of the best. The Scottish National Gallery does not yet possess an example, but the Metropolis of the West of Scotland can point to four or five in the Glasgow Municipal Gallery, and of these three or four are of the finest kind, and they are included, by special permission, amongst our plates.

One of the most remarkable Corots that exists is the superb version of *The Bent Tree* now in the Gallery at Melbourne, Australia. And something could be said about the curious hesitancy with which this picture was received when it first arrived in that distant land, about the beginning of the present century. It was put in a corner for several years. Now, however, I understand, it is hung with due honour; but like many of Corot's pictures, it has had to fight its way into public recognition in face of some official misunderstanding.

The other example of *The Bent Tree* is now in the English National Gallery, to which it was bequeathed by Mr. George Salting. From the reproduction herein our Australian friends will be able to compare their masterpiece with the one in London. In other days, when both these beautiful pictures were in the possession of Mr. Alexander Young of Blackheath, I have often seen those canvases side by

COROT VARIED HIS PICTURES

side. I am quite sure, if ever they are found together again, as of course may happen in some great international exhibition, that the Australian example will be found to be rather the better picture.

It may be observed here, that Corot very seldom made replicas of the details of his compositions, and even these two pictures of *The Bent Tree*, so similar in general arrangement, vary greatly both in tone and in colour. Occasionally Corot would make small pictures of parts of his favourite subjects, but almost always in different sizes and proportions. In the many pictures painted by Corot of nymphs dancing and of *Souvenirs a'Italie* there are none known to me as being exactly alike. Even when the composition reminds one superficially of another picture, it would be found, if the two were placed side by side, that there were many marked differences in arrangement, form and colour.

Quite a number of the Provincial Museums of France have good examples of Corot's works, two of the best (reproduced here) being at Rouen, and there are others at Lille, Bordeaux, Rheims, Lyons, Avignon and Montpellier. In England almost the only one in a provincial public gallery is to be found at Cardiff, and in the new building it will certainly be given a place of honour. The collection of Modern Art presented with such unexampled generosity to Ireland by Sir Hugh Lane contains one or two Corot pictures. No doubt when this group of works of art, so gallantly gathered together, is opened to public inspection, still better examples of the great French landscape painter will be added.

I should like to give a brief account of some of the collectors who have become noted as possessors of Corot's works, but can do so only to a limited extent. It is remarkable that these collectors have been, in fact, some of the busiest people in the world. The most severe brain-workers, the men and women who have striven by heart and mind earnestly to carry on the world's business; these are the people who have learned to look on Corot as the master-painter they prefer, who have found in his works something so reposeful and quietly attractive that they have learned to turn to them for refreshment and delight.

English gentlemen have in the past collected Italian and Dutch pictures, Titians, Vandycks, Rembrandts; and French gentlemen have patronised the earlier artists of their country, Watteau, Fragonard, and Boucher. But in France, in England, Scotland and Holland it has been the great commercial men, the merchant princes, who have most often been the serious patrons of the Barbizon School. In America it is practically the same, and in Switzerland the wealthy hotel proprietors are the present possessors of some of the most interesting specimens of Corot's work.

The collections from which we have drawn the thirty examples contained in this publication are necessarily confined to the European side of the Atlantic. But in the galleries of such men as Mr. Henry Frick, of New York; Mr. John G. Johnson, of Philadelphia; Lady Drummond, of Montreal; and other prominent collectors, even in the cities of the

far west, it would be a matter of no great difficulty to bring together as many more and of practically equal quality.

Of the galleries from which our present illustrations come the most important is, quite properly, that of Corot's birthplace; and the Paris Louvre now contains his finest works. As the painter died only in 1875, it was not until the usual limit of ten years had elapsed that such pictures as belonged to the French nation were removed to the Louvre from the Luxembourg. Within my own recollection, in the Luxembourg there was only one important picture, *Paysage—Une Matinée*, and after the death of the artist the two small Roman views which he left to the Gallery were added. For many years these three pictures remained the only examples of Corot's work which could be found in a Parisian public gallery. The *Matinée*, which is one of the series of the "Danse des Nymphes," was purchased by the French State from the Salon so long ago as 1851, but very little attention was paid to it for the succeeding quarter of a century. It was only in 1889, when the *Paysage—Lac de Garde* was added, that the ordinary visitor had an opportunity to understand the special merit of Corot's painting. The real possibility to study Corot's works did not come, even to the Parisian public, until 1902, when the great collection brought together by Monsieur Thomy Thiéry was bequeathed to the French people. Then in 1910, when the collection of Monsieur Chauchard was added, a really adequate representation of the master could be obtained in the Louvre.

In a subsequent page an account of these two great collectors, M. Thomy Thiéry and M. Chauchard, will be found. Very little has hitherto been published concerning them. As, however, they were the owners of the chief collections from which many of our illustrations come, I have taken some pains to gather together some account of their personalities.

THERE was little of the realist about Corot in his later days, and he spent all his time in painting the charms which enthralled him, as he studied the evening sun, descending among the lakes and trees, where he spent his artistic leisure. Like nearly all other painters who have achieved great facility in their maturity, Corot spent many seasons in his younger years studying forms, tones and colours for the composition of his pictures. His early works are clearly defined, carefully coloured and, in most cases, minutely finished. In his studies of buildings, of landscapes, of rocks and foliage, figures and cattle, Corot was as precise in form and colour as the most exacting realist could demand.

COROT'S EARLIER WORK CAREFULLY FINISHED

It was only gradually that Corot developed into the poet artist, the dream painter, the sunset romanticist who now compels our admiration. It may be that some of his later pictures were rapidly produced, and that he was able to obtain his effects without real or apparent effort; but this advantage was only secured as the result of an infinitude of trouble, and exercised after the painstaking efforts of his younger days had led to a gradual unity of masterly production. Up to a certain period in his life Corot was an artist such as a dozen of his compeers might have successfully emulated, although even in his earlier works, a certain half-hidden charm is distinctly remarkable. But his first pictures, and practically all that he produced up to his fiftieth year, were not, in my opinion, of a quality such as would have made him world-renowned. I have employed these words "in my opinion" here, with the object of attracting the attention of the reader to a point which is still much discussed in artistic circles. I have sometimes argued with an eminent connoisseur (who possesses, however, more intimate knowledge of Turner's pictures than of Corot's), regarding these early works of the French master, and, notwithstanding all I have said, this collector remains of the opinion that the really finest productions of Corot are those of the middle period, from 1840 to 1860. There are similar good judges of Turner's art who maintain that they prefer the middle period of his painting to the great glories of the later pictures, in so far as these are apt to become exaggerated beyond all bounds. But to me, and, I believe, to the vast majority, the poetic thrill of the later pictures of Corot, as of Turner, conveys more of the romantic uplift in one single canvas, than a dozen of the more prosaic productions of their earlier days.

With Corot, as we have already seen, it was only in his later years that he imparted into his pictures that almost indefinable sense of poetic charm, which has placed him so far ahead of, and above, other painters of his time.

In taking the later landscapes of Corot for the subject of these pages, I ask it to be kept in mind that the earlier works of the painter, and his figure pieces, are quite familiar to me, together with the black-and-white studies and occasional etchings which he produced. The figures of Corot are delightfully artistic,

and they have many eminent admirers both in Paris and New York. Outside these cities there is not much serious appreciation of them, although it is gradually spreading to Scotland and Canada. In New York I have seen Mrs. Havemeyer's collection wherein practically all the Corots (and there are over a dozen important pieces) are figure pictures. But it may be that this collection was brought together by those who did not, in any case, care for landscape pictures; for while there are, in the same mansion, seven or eight splendid Rembrandts, and other figure painters, there is no serious example of any of the Dutch masters' landscape compositions.

To the Gallery of the Louvre there was added, at the end of 1912, the famous picture *La Femme en bleu* from the Rouart collection, sold in Paris in December of that year and fetching the very high price of 178,000 francs (£7,120). This is undoubtedly the finest of all the figure pictures by Corot, and the great sum paid for it is amply justified. In the Lyons Gallery there is the *Femme à l'Atelier*, which is considered a very good example of Corot's figure painting, and Mr. John G. Johnson, of Philadelphia, possesses another fine figure piece.

The first evidence in Corot's work of the quality of poetry reveals itself as early as 1835 in his picture *Vue prise à Riva*, where, in a fairly large canvas, he represents a lake with rocky, mountainous sides. In the picture there is a boat with figures, with a cluster of trees set partly against the sky which is full of glowing light, an effect which he frequently employed in after-years. The similarity in quality of this picture to his later works has, however, to be sought for, and I repeat that if Corot had not gone much further than this the world would not, in the twentieth century, have acknowledged him a great artist. Another forerunner of the quality to come appeared in 1847, in his picture *Fishermen mending their Nets: Evening*, a small work which was in the Secretan sale of 1881. This sweet little canvas shows a strong tendency towards the poetic feeling so amply displayed in later years, although it was painted nearly twenty years before the artist attained to his full power.

COROT'S LOVE FOR TRUTH IN PAINTING

In thus commenting on the poetic charms which gradually, as it were, crept into and developed in Corot's later landscapes, it should not be forgotten that the artist held that truth in painting was one of the first qualities to be considered. In a letter written from Fontainebleau in 1835, he addresses a young artist, Bachelier, as follows: "Travaillez bien là-bas, dessinez ferme et vraie. L'aspect de la couleur vraie, vraie sortant de votre œil, sans penser à aucune autre peinture." It was this sentiment that governed all the years of Corot's earlier days in the strict and literal sense of the term; but even to the end of his pilgrimage, the desire to paint the truth was ever in his mind; and it is this basis of verity in his most romantic flights which has carried him through all the years, and landed him on the heights of poetic reality which cannot be assailed.

The majority of artists who have developed great breadth in their later pictures have begun to study in

OTHER ARTISTS' CARE IN EARLY PAINTINGS

the most careful and exacting way. Take our two English painters, Turner and Constable; and also Rembrandt and Velasquez. The development of the art of these great painters is quite readily traceable, even in the reproductions of their works; and these are now within nearly everyone's power to study.

In early days both Turner and Constable finished their landscapes with most laborious care. The early pictures by Turner, especially the water-colours, are completed to the last nail on the doors of the houses, and to the buttons on the men's coats. And there is a celebrated painting in oil by Constable, wherein every leaf of the pollard willows, and every head of corn seem to be drawn and painted, although the whole is completed with sufficient breadth of treatment to make the picture entirely acceptable. The early works of Rembrandt, such as *The Philosopher meditating* and its companion in the Louvre, and the early Velasquez pictures, are also well-known from reproductions, and they show the same scrupulous care in completion.

These four artists are named, two landscape painters and two figure painters, to show how generally applicable is this method of training and how successful it can be made. Yet it is the hope of many of our Impressionists that they can continue on in the development begun by such artists as Rembrandt and Constable, and, going further in the same direction, carry artistic production into a still greater advance. But these younger artists are ready to ignore the training through which, in early days, these great painters forced their way; they perhaps choose to forget, that one cannot secure any achievement without having worked and studied to thoroughly master the details.

Landscape art, as we now know it, is one of the results of the reaction against classic tradition, which began not much over one hundred years ago. Of course there were landscape painters earlier than this time; but, with the exception of Hobbema and Ruysdael in Holland, and Claude in France, their work was not mainly devoted to the painting of scenery; nor were landscape painters accepted as artists of the same high position as figure painters. Richard Wilson had a hard time of it to the end of his life; and Gainsborough, one of the most virile landscape painters who ever lived, could never sell his pictures of this genre, even when he had every possible success in painting portraits. And it is only within recent years that landscapes by Gainsborough have had great value set upon them. Landscape art, until the nineteenth century, was always looked at askance, and even when artists gave themselves the pleasure of painting scenes from nature, wherein figures occupied a really subordinate place, these had to be considered as a kind of luxury, for no patron ever appeared to support them in these excursions.

Rubens painted a few landscapes, and one of the finest is in the Wallace Gallery. Rembrandt painted a number also, and many connoisseurs make the journey to Cassel to see the little landscape pictures in that gallery. Our own Reynolds is known also to have painted a few woodland pieces, and in these

he displays a knowledge of tone and colour which would have made him master of the art, had he so desired.

Thomas Bewick, also, in his quiet way, exercised a strong influence at the beginning of the eighteenth century through the exquisite landscape tailpieces to his "History of British Birds." Bewick found wood-engraving a craft of making diagrams, and he left it a pictorial art, which, in its way, has never been excelled.

It was Turner, however, in England and the Barbizon men in France who really developed landscape art as we now know it, and Corot was the greatest of all amongst his colleagues, especially, as we are so often pointing out, in the poetic qualities of his compositions.

The story of the beginnings of the great French landscape group has been told by me in my book on the Barbizon School of painters (1892), but it is useful here to recall some of the circumstances. In 1824 a Frenchman purchased from Constable in London three large landscapes, and he had these exhibited at the Salon, in Paris, of that year. The chief picture was *The Hay Wain*, now one of the treasures of the English National Gallery, and anyone can there see how traditional it is in its expression. But the freshness of this picture was considered as absolutely revolutionary when it was first shown, and its appearance in France quickly led to a change of method of work, a change that altered the whole character and tendency of landscape painting in that country. Several of the artists re-arranged and even repainted their pictures when they saw Constable's work, and from that time forward a new force was present in landscape production. We have now no means of knowing for certain how far all this affected Corot in his art, but, as he was then just beginning his artistic career, it is very likely that he was deeply interested in the Constable campaign in France.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COROT'S ART

But the development of Corot, as we have already seen, was slow to the last degree. Whereas in his early days he painted trees as solidly as Constable or Reynolds, it was only towards the end of his life that he rendered them, to use his own words, in such a way that "the birds could fly through." Let an example be taken of the birch trees in the centre of our picture *Joinville-sur-Marne*, which may be accepted as one of the best types of the later expressions of tree-painting by the artist. Herein the delicacy of Corot's painting is visible in its highest perfection, and to fail in loving such a piece may be taken as sufficient evidence that nothing Corot has done will be found charming or interesting.

COROT NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD

THERE is now but little pioneering work to be done in discussing the works of Corot. They are accepted in nearly every place where quality and tone-painting are understood. A few months ago I should have spoken of this acceptance in a more emphatic way, but for an incident in connection with a Loan Exhibition in Cardiff in the year of grace 1913.

The little collection brought together in this busy Welsh city only numbered sixty pictures in all, but every one of these was worth looking at. Amongst these sixty there were half-a-dozen canvases by Corot; and of these two of the most important of the group are, by the courtesy of the enlightened owner, included amongst our representations of the artist herein. These are *Les Danseurs de Castel Gandolfo* and *Joinville-sur-Marne*. Therefore any reader can examine the pictures through these plates which, without question, can be accepted as faithful reproductions, and everyone may judge of their merits.

But, without discussing the qualities of these pictures, I wish to draw attention to the criticism of them in the best local newspaper at the time. The writer of that article, who is considered an authority in the vicinity, and in any case is able to command a column in a high-class paper, described the Corots, and especially the *Castel Gandolfo*, as "muddy in colour," and others as "spotty, dirty, colourless landscapes." The exact words were: "No doubt it is unfair to judge a painter by only a few of his works, but candidly, Corot is disappointing. Of course, it is the fashion to gush about his works, and to pay large prices for them, but, honestly speaking, these several examples of Corot are spotty, dirty, colourless landscapes, sometimes in tone and the values good, and sometimes not. No. 12, *Castel Gandolfo*, is, no doubt, the best of the lot. Its values are correct, and its distance is splendid, but like the others, it is muddy in colour."

It is only fair to say that these uninspired remarks were somewhat severely handled by other contributors to the paper, writers who were well able to defend the true position of the artist.

But it is perhaps scarcely for me to complain too seriously about such evidence of want of perception of the finer qualities of Corot's work, for in "The Art Journal" (on the editorial staff of which I spent many years) there were criticisms of Corot which were equally barbarous; but "The Art Journal" criticism was written some forty years ago, and, therefore, long before I became connected with the publication.

In 1869 it described the picture sent to the Royal Academy of that year as "claiming to be a poem, yet the atmosphere is smoky, and the trees somewhat dirty," but it goes on, happily, to admit that the work is "eminently artistic in the balance of composition and the apportionment of light and shade, and in the pervading unison of tone."

On the other hand, all the authorities of any

account are unanimous in accepting Corot as an artist of the very first rank. One of the most consistent writers, a critic properly carrying great weight in artistic circles, Sir Claude Phillips, wrote in the London *Daily Telegraph* (April 7th, 1913), in describing a small but important collection : "We enter this quiet temple where are things which, in a sense, have passed beyond the range of criticism, consecrated by universal admiration, by universal sympathy. The beauty, the hush of these Corots is a balm to the troubled spirit bruised a little by the strenuousness of modernity that will brook no brooding disquiet, no tender contemplativeness."

The truth is that the amount of artistic education necessary to be brought to a work by Corot so as to understand it immediately is not within the possibilities of every one, and without some such training his pictures are not very easy to appreciate at the first glance. Happily, however, as I have said elsewhere in this publication, it is within the power of everyone to understand and enjoy them for themselves by setting up any one of the reproductions which pleases them, and leaving it where it can be seen a number of times, when its beauty will gradually begin to be realised.

In ordinarily intelligent circles the works of Corot are, of course, accepted without discussion as being of the most refining and most delightful influence. They are now allowed to rest in the atmosphere such as prevails in a well-chosen library, where every work has been carefully selected, an atmosphere of acceptance, of calm and high appreciation.

Yet the days are not so very far away when Corot was one of the lesser accepted painters even in France itself. In my own experience the change has been complete. When I studied painting, in Paris, in the late seventies of last century, I was one of the few, in fact, so far as I could ascertain at the time, I was the only student who thought it worth while seriously to study the men of "the School of 1830," as these artists were generally then styled. I began in the old Luxembourg by copying the small picture by Theodore Rousseau, *The Edge of the Wood*, and made a careful study of it in oil, of the same size. I was prompted to begin with this because I loved its mystery, and the size made it a modest commencement for one who was then at the very beginning of things.

THE CHANGE
NOW NEARLY
COMPLETI

The next picture I approached was the *Danse des Nymphes : une Matinée*, the picture by Corot of his early-middle period, now almost too well-known by the many reproductions, and for this reason, I may add, omitted here. For, as I have said in an earlier page, this was the only Corot which could be found in the Louvre, or in any public gallery in those days. I painted at my copy conscientiously for about a fortnight, and by the end of that time I knew that Corot was the painter most sympathetic to me. Such training is delightful in itself, and it is one of the most certain ways of thoroughly understanding a painter. I may add also that I did not find it really very difficult to imitate, with a measure of success, the tones of Corot's painting.

ROUSSEAU AND COROT

Rousseau's work, as I found at this same period, in copying his *Coucher de Soleil* (then upstairs in the Louvre), was far more difficult for me to render. It may be, of course, that the sentiment of Corot was so welcome to my early intuitions, that I was easily able to reproduce his work; but I am inclined to think that, while the initial production of a masterpiece by Corot is one of the greatest triumphs of art, the copying thereof embraces so much mechanical work, that it presents no insuperable difficulties for anyone who is accustomed to the use of paint.

This leads me to the question of the imitations of Corot's works which are said to have flooded certain markets, mostly on the other side of the Atlantic. How far this is true of America I have been unable to exactly ascertain. During my several visits to the United States and Canada, I did not come across more than a score or two (certainly far under a hundred) pictures with Corot's name thereon, and I distinctly discredit the statement that many thousands of Corot's paintings have passed through the Customs of New York. I did not myself see a single example of which I had any doubt as to its authenticity; and although it may be I was visiting only the collections of well-known connoisseurs, it is curious that none of the often-referred-to imitations came under my notice. It is to be kept in mind that Corot left 600 pictures and sketches in his studio when he died, and although this number is small enough when compared with the 20,000 left by Turner, it was sufficient to feed the picture market for a very long time. Moreover, Corot led a most industrious life and he painted indefatigably for fifty years, so that the sum total in M. Robaut's great tomes on the artist shows that there are something like 3,200 works in all which have been traced and described as from the brush and pencil of Corot.

The statement is usually put to the credit of a Customs House officer of the United States that there are many thousand pictures by Corot in America, and that the United States Customs alone have records far exceeding the whole possible output of even a long-lived and hard-working artist.

But it will be found that this assertion, even if well-grounded, which, I repeat, I strongly doubt, is based on numbers which embrace every kind of reproduction, every etching, engraving or photograph, which has passed through the American *douane* with Corot's name attached. An official of Customs has only a limited opportunity to ascertain what the pictures really are which pass through the gateways of his country; and a whole edition of prints from Corot's very popular pictures would naturally greatly swell the number of works of art set down to his name.

Moreover, it is not likely that the American public would be deceived for any length of time. It ought to be better known in Europe, and in any case it is the fact, that the American (as well as the Canadian) lover of pictures is one of the most enlightened and exacting of connoisseurs. A disparagement of the art of Corot, such as our Cardiff newspaper printed,

is perfectly unthinkable in either the United States or Canada. It is certain that the collectors on the western shores of the Atlantic take matters of art much more seriously than we do on the European side. Not only is this the fact with the older generation, but it is even more emphatically the case with the younger people. The education at present in artistic ideas is taken in a most serious way, and in the future this is likely to be strengthened rather than otherwise.

Growing up amidst surroundings which are not yet old enough to inspire the respect and charm which call forth the finer feelings, the young people of America realise how necessary to them it is to surround themselves, so far as they can, with artistic productions from the older communities of the world. Therefore they study the arts and crafts of Europe and Asia, with a whole-hearted desire to secure the best possible out of them; and their studies are guided by able and enthusiastic experts and teachers, extending over the whole continent from Montreal to Los Angeles, and from Philadelphia and St. Louis to Vancouver.

Some of the more parochial-minded writers in Europe gird at America and the avidity with which its countrymen absorb artistic productions, as witness this foolish exaggeration of works of Corot imported; but those who have been across the ocean know how welcome there the best art is. This is not by any means confined to pictures, but is for everything artistic; and how heartily such works are received, and with what understanding they are discussed, is noticeable on every hand.

AMERICAN LOVE FOR THE BEST IN ART

We in England may very well be reminded that the artistic productions departing for America have equal right to remain there, as have the artistic works imported wholesale into England from the continent of Europe one hundred-and-twenty years ago to remain in this country. At the time of the French Revolution there were literally thousands of pictures, of pieces of sculpture, bronzes, and tapestry, brought to England because the English connoisseur appreciated them and was willing to buy them; but this country has only the same right to the possession of them as have the present-day zealous collectors of the West.

The truth is art knows no frontiers, and a picture by Israels in New York or Montreal (and there are many) has the same abiding charm as when it was painted in Holland, and afterwards hung in Paris or in London. So it is with Corot; and if Americans appreciate his masterpieces more highly than we in Europe, it is only in the natural course of events that they should secure possession of them.

THE THOMY THIÉRY PICTURES

THE Collection of Barbizon pictures brought together by M. Thomy Thiéry is now arranged on the third floor of the Louvre, and for this reason it is comparatively seldom visited. These are the same rooms in which the general collection of the later French pictures was shown for many years, and the light and general arrangements are good; yet before arriving there the visitor is required to walk through many dreary rooms filled with the Museum of Marine examples, being mostly model ships, and this long walk prevents the collection becoming so well-known as it deserves to be. The position is somewhat similar to the Diploma Gallery at Burlington House, London, which, although open every day free, and containing a number of most excellent works of art, including the wonderful *Tondo* by Michael Angelo, is never visited by more than a few people at a time.

M. Thomy Thiéry lived and died without his personality becoming known beyond a few intimate friends. Even since his great gift to the Louvre has made his name famous, very little has been told of his history. M. Thomy Thiéry was born in the island of Mauritius, on the 13th of April, 1823, a place where his family held large estates of sugar plantations. He was sent to the College of Port Louis, the only important town on the island, and, like his relatives, he became a successful sugar-planter. It was not until 1856 that he visited Paris, and having by this time inherited a vast fortune, he remained in France until the end of his life, his death taking place on the 3rd of January, 1902. He maintained his interest in the distant property, but having "a soul above niggers" he gave most of his time to the collection of works of art.

It was in 1880 that he commenced seriously to make a collection of pictures of the Barbizon men, and of the marvellous bronzes by Barye, of which, at the time of his death, he possessed no less than 146. Most of his purchases were from well-known collections, and he never seems to have hunted amongst the bye-ways for bargains.

Being well on in years—nearly sixty—when he began to form his collection, he was able to bring to the task a mature knowledge of art, and this, combined with a severe business training, taught him to be willing to pay the price when he found what he wanted. As all the world knows, any one with such experience, and willing to give five per cent. above his neighbours, is able to obtain nearly anything in the world of art he desires. The sums M. Thomy Thiéry paid for his twelve Corots are not recorded, but he was pleased to give £9,000 (225,000 francs) for a Troyon, and £8,000 (200,000 francs) for a Dupré, so that his collection must have been very costly. By 1895 he had completed his gallery, but he never would permit visitors to enter his beautiful house at No. 4, Rue du General Foy, which is situated near the church of St. Augustin.

While M. Thomy Thiéry was an enemy to every kind of publicity, the originator of the other great collection now in the Louvre, M. Chauchard, made

his fortune by the advertising of his business. M. Hippolyte F. A. Chauchard was the moving spirit of the warehouse, dry-goods store or shop, known all over the world as the Magasins du Louvre. The great building in the Rue du Rivoli, exactly opposite the Musée du Louvre, rivals Harrod's or Whiteley's, in London, or Mr. Ben Altman's wonderful store in New York.

M. Chauchard was born in 1828 and he died in his palatial "Hotel," 5, Avenue Velasquez, Parc Monceau, on the 5th of June, 1909, his funeral being regarded as a public event in Paris. By his will of 1906-7, M. Chauchard bequeathed his collection of 170 pictures and bronzes, by Barbizon and contemporary artists, to the Louvre, and of these no less than twenty-six are by Corot. The collection being on the first floor at the Louvre, adjoining the Rubens rooms, at the end of the long Gallery, it is much more accessible than the Thomy Thiéry group on the floor above. And as it embraces the always popular *Angelus* by Jean François Millet, and the "1814," by Meissonier, the Chauchard pictures have by far the larger number of visitors.

The difference between these two celebrated collections has been truly observed by Mr. E. V. Lucas, in his book "A Wanderer in Paris," in so far that M. Thomy Thiéry embodied the taste of a well-trained man who liked his pictures; while M. Chauchard merely had the acumen of one who desired "the reputation of virtuosity, but did not want to lose any money over it." Again, of M. Thomy Thiéry's collection it could be said that "the Barbizon Painters never did anything more delightful or indeed better." The one collection, in fact, reveals the man of taste with money, the other displays the man of money with a little taste.

Outside the public galleries there are not now many Corot pictures in France, but in Paris there are fine examples in the collections of M. L. Tauber, M. W. Blumenthal, M. Géntien, M. Sarlin, and M. Sabourdin. In Epernay, M. Gallice and Mdme. Auban Moët; M. Descamps Scrive in Lille; M. Maniez in Denain; together with M. Leon Lhermitte, the celebrated painter, who is a great admirer of the master, all possess artistic pieces by Corot.

In England the most notable collectors have also been men engrossed in business affairs, filling influential positions, so that at every hour of the day, one or two, or sometimes half-a-dozen, men in high employment might be seen waiting their turn outside their private office doors. The best known collectors in England were Mr. Alexander Young and Mr. J. S. Forbes. Mr. Young was at the head of an accountancy business operating all over the British Empire; Mr. Forbes was the Chairman of the National Telephone Company, and Managing Director of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway. Of the pictures in Mr. Alexander Young's collection, which was dispersed in 1910, we have one noted example amongst our reproductions, viz., *Joinville-sur-Marne*, which, although measuring only $12\frac{1}{8}$ by $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches, fetched no less than £2,625 at Messrs. Christies' auction rooms in that year. Several of the "Young" Corots were purchased by Mr. George

Salting and have since been included in the English National Gallery.

The bequests of Mr. Salting to the National Gallery contained the first important pictures of the Barbizon School to be added to the nation's treasures. There were, of course, the pictures in the Wallace Collection, but Corot's *Macbeth* is a work in the artist's earlier manner, although dated 1859, and does not excite any enthusiasm. The grand canvas, however, by Theodore Rousseau of the setting sun at Fontainebleau, is only second to the somewhat similar composition in the Louvre.

Mr. Salting's gifts, in addition to the Daubignys, Dupré, and J. F. Millet, embraced half-a-dozen examples of Corot, several of them very fine. *The Fisherman's Hut* (No. 2631) and *The Bent Tree* (No. 2625) are both reproduced amongst our plates as the choicest of the group; but *The Wood-gatherers* (No. 2626) and *Noon: Environs of Douai* (No. 2628) are splendid works of the first rank, both coming, together with the others named, from the Young Collection.

Now, although it is true that hitherto the most prominent connoisseurs of Corot's paintings have been business men, whose pictures have afterwards greatly increased in money value, it is not the case that these collectors have been actuated alone by the mere prospect of gain. No doubt these particular men named knew in their minds that they were acquiring property which would probably increase in value, but far above this, they loved to retain these beautiful canvases around them, and it is only at their lives' end that they were dispersed. M. Thomy Thiéry, without doubt, from first to last enjoyed the possession of his intelligently brought-together collection, and he left it all to his fellow countrymen, and for the rest of the world to enjoy also. M. Chauchard was immensely proud of his pictures although he, too, did not very often allow them to be seen; while Mr. Young and Mr. Forbes, both of whom I knew well, were absolutely enthusiastic in their love of these Barbizon pictures, and they gave every facility for them to be examined. To the Old Masters, at Burlington House, and to the London Guildhall; to International Exhibitions in Paris and Provincial Galleries, they were frequent contributors. And at his death in 1905 the executors of Mr. Forbes considered the best tribute they could pay to his memory was to open his unique collection, and show it at the Grafton Gallery in London during the Season.

While on this theme I wish to add that the succession of collectors of such pictures continues vigorously in England and in Scotland, although a desire to preserve anonymity has grown up in a very marked way. In the United States and Canada collectors have increased largely; and in the West, Chicago, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Vancouver have all their collectors of fine pictures of this kind. There are also several groups of Barbizon pictures in Belgium and Holland, the best known of the latter being M. Mesdag's at The Hague.

Following the custom of painters' biographers some connoisseurs of Corot's pictures endeavour to

divide into groups of "late" and "early" works every picture coming under their notice, and even to fix the year in which they were painted. This chronological arrangement, which is comparatively easy with the majority of painters, is well-nigh impossible with Corot; and, except being able to tell at which year's Salon his picture was exhibited, one can usually only guess round about the actual date of production. In saying this, I do not mean that there is any chance of confusion as to an early picture by Corot, say up to 1835, when the painter was forty years old, nor could a canvas painted in the last fifteen years of the artist's life be mistaken for an early work. But to be positive as to the exact year in which any of the latter works were painted must be held to reveal a want of knowledge of Corot's manner of execution.

The reason for this difficulty of dating precisely any picture, arises from the way that Corot fell into during the later years of his life. This was of taking up a canvas which had been begun a long time previously, and either completing it, or carrying it only a stage further towards being finished. On entering his studio in the morning Corot was sometimes in the mood for looking over his old canvases, standing in rows against the walls of his studio. When he died in 1875 there were several hundred studies which were left incomplete; so that for years he always had a large choice when he felt reminiscent at the beginning of his day's labours. Quite a number of these pictures, begun in much younger days, remained unfinished even to the end. I am disposed to think that the compositions showing a château on the edge of a hill, often entitled *Souvenir d'Italie*, were the result of studies made in early life, and only fully utilised when the moment of inspiration arrived in later times.

COROT'S METHOD OF COMPOSING A PICTURE

A *Souvenir d'Italie* begun about the thirties would have the composition arranged and the general tone indicated. Such a picture might lie untouched for nearly a decade, when one fine morning the painter would feel the *motif* sympathetic, and work on it for another long sitting. Again, the canvas would remain, turned with its face to the wall, for a further dozen years, and then again the psychological moment would arrive for the master to paint on it and perhaps complete the picture and sign the canvas. How is it possible for any precise date to be given for a picture which has undergone a process like this?

M. Alfred Robaut, who has devoted a lifetime to cataloguing and arranging Corot's works, is always very careful about giving dates to even the principal works of the painter; and in his exhaustive lists the pictures are usually grouped into dates covering three or four years at a time. Such a picture as might have been painted in various decades is the *Danseurs de Castel Gandolfo*, which we reproduce. It was completed some time between 1855 and 1860, but the arrangement of the distant castle indicates a much earlier year for the composition to be settled. The large group of trees is probably a good deal later, while the foreground, the figures, and the general airiness and grace of the smaller trees are all of a still later period, and may even be of a time after 1868, the date usually attached to the picture.

COROT GREY-HEADED BEFORE ARTISTICALLY RECOGNISED

WHEN Corot was chosen Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur in 1846 his good father thought that a mistake had been made in the name, and that the honour was really intended for himself.

This little incident was representative of all the experiences of the artist, so far as his immediate family was concerned. Corot was fifty-five years of age, and his hair was beginning to turn grey, yet his father could not conceal his astonishment at the honour offered to him; and when the painter began to find buyers for his pictures the old man was quite overcome. Not that the father had any wish to be unkind to his son, and in fact they lived together in the most amiable way for all those years; it was, however, always with a kind of a sigh and a smile that the painter-son was treated.

Many years afterwards, when Corot had become an old man, some of his youthful admirers gave him a dinner. The *pièce de résistance* of the feast was a chicken, and the young artists gave Corot the wing; but Corot gently put it aside and said that the wing really was the piece for a prince, and he had for so many years been accorded the leg—the "drum-stick"—that he really had come to like that part of the fowl the best.

Corot was born in Paris on the 17th of July, 1796, in a house which stood at the corner of the Rue du Bac and the Quai d'Orsay, opposite the Pont Royal—a house rebuilt at the end of the nineteenth century. There were two daughters in the family, one older and one younger than the artist, and Jean Baptiste Camille Corot was the only son.

The occupation of his father has never been clearly defined. It is recorded that he was employed in the offices of the Ville de Paris, but in what capacity is not stated. His name was Louis Jacques Corot, and when he married in 1792 he announced himself to be the son of Claude Corot, twenty-two, *perruquier*, an exalted title for a plain barber and hairdresser. In the same record Corot's mother's name is given as Marie Françoise Oberson, twenty-four, daughter of a wine merchant at Versailles.

To these prosaic facts is added in the marriage contract the more romantic summary of the *dots* the happy pair brought to the household. The youth is possessed of 1,500 *livres*, the old name for *francs*, (£60), in clothes, linen, furniture, and hard cash out of his gains and savings, together with 600 francs (£24) from the property of his father, the wig-maker. The young lady makes the more showy announcement, that she brings to the household 10,000 *livres* (£400), represented by a property in Fribourg, in Switzerland, and by various sums due in Versailles. But fifty years and more later the truth is revealed by the now aged Madame Corot, in her declaration at the death of her husband, Corot's father, in 1847. She then states that she did not know what were the properties in Switzerland named in her marriage contract, that she had not sold them, nor had she "touched" any of their returns. Further, that the funds of the

boutique de perruquier having become valueless, had been abandoned purely and simply during the course of her married life.

The little mystery about the occupation of his father is the only touch of snobbishness in all Corot's story, for it is apparently the fact that on their marriage Corot's parents were, the one a genteel kind of hairdresser, and his mother was a milliner. Mr. Everard Meynell in his book on "Corot and his Friends" tells the story in a racy and delightful way.

Corot's mother seems to have been always the "Grey Mare" of the household, and to have made good use of the two years she was older than her husband. The corner at the Rue du Bac held her once famous establishment which became the resort of many fashionable ladies, and the *modes* of Madame Corot were the subject of one of Gavarni's drawings. In later days the father kept the books of the business, and doubtless through this he gradually let slip the barber's premises he once possessed.

Neither the father nor the mother seem to have been happy about Corot becoming an artist, and everything was done to entice him to take to commercial pursuits. He was sent at the age of ten to a school at Rouen, but there he made little progress, and his teacher grumbled at his noisy ways. For five or six years, however, he remained there, and was only taken away after a quarrel with his master. For two years further he went to Poissy, and at the age of eighteen he was brought back to Paris to be trained in a drapery business. But for occupation of this kind Corot had no aptitude, yet, like the loyal son he ever was, he struggled on and tried to learn ordinary business habits. As a salesman, however, he was a complete failure, and his employer came to the inevitable conclusion that the lad was out of his element. It was always said in the family, however, and as showing Corot's really sound business instinct, that, to assist a colleague, he invented the scheme of pricing things in retail shops just under an even amount; for example, a fr. 2 article was marked fr. 1.95 in the way that English drapers still say 1s. 11¾d. for what ordinarily might be 2s.

COROT NOT AN ORDINARY BUSINESS MAN

The millinery business of Corot's mother flourished for many years, and in 1817, when their son was twenty-one, his parents acquired a little property at Ville d'Avray, where Corot's artistic education was matured.

This beautiful country spot still retains some of its primitive sweetness, and one of the most delightful day's journeys in the vicinity of Paris is to go either on foot or in a carriage from St. Cloud, and on to Versailles by way of Ville d'Avray. To-day one will find there a memorial to the artist erected in stone; but the best memorial is the place itself with its little lakes and woods and shady walks, where Corot learned his finest lessons from Nature.

When the artist was become a famous man he was invited, in 1871, by a literary friend to set down the chief incidents of his life and he wrote the following:—

"Paris, 5 février, 1871.

"Monsieur,—D'après votre désir, je vous remets quelque note biographique (*sic*).

COROT'S OWN SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE

"J'ai été au collège de Rouen jusqu'à dix-huit ans. De là, j'ai passé huit ans dans le commerce. Ne pouvant plus y tenir, je me suis fait peintre de paysages ; élève de Michallon d'abord. L'ayant perdu, je suis entré dans l'atelier de Victor Bertin. Après, je me suis lancé tout seul, sur la nature, et voilà ! "

This is certainly a brief enough summary, and too brief even for the not very eventful life of the artist; but the truth is, there is not very much to be told when the story of Corot's becoming a painter has been related.

The unwillingness of the parents to be reconciled to Corot's desire to become an artist must not, however, be construed to mean that he was in any way unhappy at home, his ever-buoyant nature alone would have prevented this; but, besides, when it was at last agreed that the young man must have his way, the father gave him an allowance, which, even in its meagreness, sufficed for his wants. This was only 1,500 francs (£60) a year, and he had little more than this to live on for a dozen years thereafter. Then he began to find a patron here and there, and a little later the Emperor Napoleon himself bought one of his landscapes, and had it hung in the apartments in the Tuileries. Corot experienced the usual and comprehensible difficulty in obtaining purchasers for his pictures, and for all these years he had to content himself with the modest allowance from his father. There is reason to believe, all the same, that Corot's mother, following the example of many another mother, was willing to help her son when special occasion arose.

However, the years went by, Corot steadily painting out-of-doors and exhibiting in the various Salons held in Paris. To the Exhibition in 1832 he sent a large canvas, *The Forest of Fontainebleau: The Ford*, and for this he was awarded a medal of the second class, a certain distinction for one who had so recently taken to the profession of painting.

Corot studied mostly from nature, but he made at least one copy in the Louvre (in 1830) from a large landscape by Michallon (1785–1820). This artist is now forgotten, but for Michallon Corot always had a strong liking, and in his studio Corot, as indicated in the letter quoted, spent some profitable time at the beginning of his career.

In the Salon of 1840 Corot exhibited a picture, 52 × 42 inches, named in the catalogue *Paysage-Soleil couchant,* but since then entitled *Le petit Berger*. This was purchased by the State for 1,500 francs (£60), and curiously enough it is now German property. It was presented by the French Government at the time to Metz, and of course it was handed over with the rest of the city to Germany in 1871. Also in the Salon of 1840 Corot exhibited a *Figure of a Monk walking through the Fields*, and this afterwards went to Havre for exhibition, and was there sold for 500 francs (£20), one of Corot's first sales outside his personal friends. It is very likely, however, although not so recorded, that the artist had an occasional patron before this time.

A well-authenticated story is told of a buyer appearing at Corot's studio in 1841, and making a purchase of a picture for 250 francs (£10), and

the artist was so willing to be liberal, and give his patron a bargain, that he added another picture to the purchase. It is curious to note, however, that nearly all the pictures painted up to this time remained in the artist's studio, and at his death in 1875 they formed a great part of the posthumous sale.

It was about the time Corot became acquainted with his friends at Arras that he drew up his Principles of Art for his young friends. He wrote:—

"A man should only take up the profession of an artist if he feels within him a strong love of nature, and the capacity to follow the calling with a perseverance that nothing can daunt. He must not thirst for approbation, nor for the making of money. He must not be discouraged by the fault-finding through which others may condemn his work. It is necessary to be armed with the strongest convictions that will enable him to go straight ahead, fearing no obstacles. A man of incessant toil, either as executant, or as observer, and with an invincible conscientiousness. Filled with such conscientiousness it may happen that he will create works where some striking fault may readily be visible to others, but he must go on in his way, for no one becomes an artist in a single day. Let him persevere, his conscientiousness will save him. Does he seem to see things in a wrong way—conscientiously he will soon bring everything into harmony, and in due time he will come closer to nature every day. The important point for him is to paint nothing but what he sees, and in the way he sees it. The only staff he may use from time to time to support him in his march is to give a glance at the works of the best masters, the really great men, such as Michael Angelo, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Holbein, Correggio, Titian, Claude Lorraine, Poussin, Le Sueur (*sic*), Hobbema, Terburg, Metzu, Canaletto. The inspirations received from these, however, should only serve to facilitate the development of his own powers."

In M. Robaut's records there is a pretty story told of a brother painter who wrote to Corot in 1847 expressing a keen desire to possess one of his landscapes. Corot was himself *en voyage*, so his father replied very graciously that he would at once communicate with his son about the picture and that he was "*aussi charmé que surpris*" at the request. This was the last year of the father's life, and the incident is only another evidence that to the end he never realized the artistic position of his son.

On his return ten days later Corot wrote himself to this artist, M. Dutilleux, of Arras, and offered to send a picture for the modest sum of 200 francs (£8), and when he was uncertain which of two particular canvases he might prefer, he sent them both so that a choice could be made. This little purchase was the beginning of a friendship which lasted to the very end of Corot's days, for the painter became intimate with M. Dutilleux and all his family, and he frequently went to Arras in later days to paint. At the time of the 1870 war, on the conclusion of the siege of Paris, which he went through, as will be related, Corot visited Arras to recruit after the privations of that terrible time.

COROT'S LONG AND HAPPY LIFE

THE later years of Corot's long life—the years in which he painted nearly every one of the pictures here reproduced—were spent by him in unwearying attendance at his easel, and his life was as happy as the proverbial community which possesses no history. There is very little to tell beyond the record of his works, and of his contributions to the Salon. At every one of these Parisian Exhibitions he showed his pictures, and he was so much associated with the Salon that in 1870 (just before the Franco-German war) he and his friend Daubigny were elected by their fellow-artists to the two first places on the Selection Jury, Corot being the second. By this time, however, these artists were too old for the fatigue occasioned by such a post, and both resigned in favour of younger friends.

Corot had been chosen Chevalier of the Legion of Honour as early as 1846, and in 1867 he was promoted, at the personal initiative of the Emperor Napoleon III., to be *Officier*. Medals, too, he received for his exhibited works, in 1833, 1848, 1855 and 1867, but he never attained to the Medal of Honour, as his admirers so strongly desired. At one time Cabanel, and at another Gérôme were preferred for the honour in competition with Corot, men who were both clever figure painters, and well-known in their day, although now being rapidly forgotten. Also Corot was never elected Academician of France.

In this meagre display of contemporary honours may be found a reflex of the course of Corot's fame. He painted so much for the future that it was only a few people here and there, amongst his colleagues, who accorded him the place where a succeeding generation has enthroned him. Although Corot never was without friends and, in his later days, ardent partisans, yet their united influence failed to obtain for him, during his lifetime, a tithe of the distinction which is now his own.

But Corot did not worry himself about such matters, and he went on serenely painting all the time, happy when he was understood and appreciated, but never going more than a very little out of his way to foster his reputation. He was usually willing, however, to explain his precepts to the young painters with whom he was in constant touch. It is related that in 1860 he gave some half-serious, half-humorous words of advice to Oudinot, one of his followers: "When, *par hasard*," Corot said, "you find you have put too much colour on any part of the picture, just lift it away with either your finger or your thumb, and the chance may serve you very well." The sketch made at this time still exists, and one can easily trace the finger marks of the artist on the canvas.

It was in 1862 that Corot took his one journey to London. He made the expedition chiefly because of the International Exhibition, where he had contributed a landscape, although it never attracted any special attention. The journey was absolutely uneventful, and Corot does not seem even to have taken time to write to his friends in France. He

was in London only one week, and the artists to whom he had been recommended, Eyre Crowe and Val Prinsep, were not of the sufficiently enthusiastic kind to record any incidents of the visit. One would like to know where Corot lived, and with whom he spent the few days in England. In my own "Barbizon Book" I relate the only incident of the visit which so far has found its way into print :—

"Mr. Henry Wallis, the well-known painter and archæologist, who spent a good deal of time with Corot, remembers their going up the Thames to Marlow, when a peculiar formation of a tree particularly struck the French artist. The weather was very warm, and Corot was a little astonished to see so much sunshine in what he understood was foggy, rainy England."

When preparing this mention of Corot's travelling to England, I wrote to Mr. Wallis, who is still hale and hearty in his older age (and he is now also a member of the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours), and asked him if he could tell me any more about the visit. Under date February 1st, 1914, Mr. Wallis has written a long letter expressing his readiness to tell all he can with reference to Corot's coming to London ; but he is compelled to say it was "so short and uneventful that when you have stated the fact, you have almost exhausted the subject." Mr. Wallis continues : "He evidently was attracted with the Marlow country and wished to make some studies there ; indeed, I had arranged to find quarters for him in the neighbourhood. However, on seeing Eyre Crowe a day or two after, he told me that Corot had arranged to return to Paris with some friends ; and I remember we both agreed it was the wiser course for him to take, considering his age."

Corot painted only three small sketches during this visit, one in the neighbourhood of the Crystal Palace, another at Richmond, and the third a scene with a large lake in the foreground, maybe a view from the bridge across the Serpentine, with the distant houses just showing over the trees. Corot also visited Grosvenor House, where a portrait by Rembrandt, a *Village Scene* by Hobbema, and two Claude Lorraines attracted his attention. As we have already noted, the influence of Claude was a very powerful one over our artist, and the chief traditional feeling in Corot's pictures comes from his illustrious French predecessor.

Though very little is said about it in contemporary records, there is no doubt Corot was conscious of the great esteem in which, even in his early days, his works were held in England. This appreciation is shown in a letter he wrote to Daubigny during that artist's short sojourn in London at the time of the Franco-German war. When the invasion of France took place, Daubigny sought refuge some time in England and some time in Holland, and he painted several notable pictures in and round London, including the view of *St. Paul's from the Surrey Side*, which is now in the National Gallery, London.

Corot and Daubigny, as we know, were close friends for many years, and in 1864 Corot decorated Daubigny's domicile with some pictures which have

since become famous. This letter from Corot was in reply to Daubigny's inquiry as to his health, after the long days of siege:—

"Paris, 14th February, 1871.

"My dear Friend,

"How much I thank you for your kind remembrance and for your solicitude regarding us this winter. Ah, yes, we have suffered a lot, but my health is good. I hope, like you, that we shall soon be able to meet again and to embrace each other.

"They are thinking then of an exhibition over there? Why, at seven hours' distance from each other, are two countries so different? This is what I really cannot understand. However, I will tell you, to relieve your anxiety, that I have never felt keener for work. This winter I have done more than usual.

"I think that misfortune has caused me to take refuge under the vault of Heaven, under the thick shades, and to put myself in the finest place to hear the birds' concert.

"Compared with this quietude, what matter the little annoying troubles that man makes? Long live the shower of stars and the charming little flowers of the meadow.

"I am very pleased to hear that all three of you are well, as well as the Daubigny family. It seems that my painting is getting acclimatised to England, *Vive la joie!*—Yours ever, C. Corot.

"My love to the ladies."

Corot had been greatly perturbed by the approach of the Germans to Paris in the autumn of 1870, but he resolved to remain in the city, and at the same time, notwithstanding his advanced age, he seriously thought of helping to defend the walls. He had been spending his summer at Ville d'Avray with his sister, now a widow, Madame Sennegon, who had carried on the *magasin des modes* of Corot's mother for many years. While she went off to the South of France Corot moved into Paris, and took up his abode near his studio in the Rue Paradis-Poissonnière (now Rue Paradis) just as the gates were being closed in the middle of September, 1870.

During all the four months' siege Corot spent much time in his studio, and although he had moments of energetic denunciation of the enemy, he calmed himself by going round the hospitals and ambulances and distributing money to relieve the misery he found. One day, it is said, he sent a large sum to the mayor of his own district, with the message that he consecrated the money to making "the cannons necessary to chase the Prussians from the woods of Ville d'Avray." At another time he gave one hundred thousand francs (£4,000) for a project "to liberate the country." But as this fell through, he consigned the money to the poor of Paris.

A little later in the year 1871, after the return of Madame Sennegon, he wrote to Madame Dutilleux, whom he had visited at Arras, immediately after the raising of the siege, and in this letter he gave expression to some sentiments which show how rapidly his habitual cheerfulness had returned.

"Ville d'Avray, August 3, 1871.

"Dear Madame and Friend,

"I take out my spectacles at once to tell you that

we are settled here, my sister and I. The house has been cleaned, and all traces of the Prussians have disappeared. My sister is in fairly good health. She desires me to give you her compliments and to all your family. I have begun some studies at Ville d'Avray and found some subjects, but these are not the pretty flats of Arleux, Pallael, etc. I enjoyed myself greatly there, and I fancy you must still do the same since you never tire of it, and that Madame Marie is finding peace and rest and health in consequence. I can but hope it may be so.

"Catch me, pray, a noble eel
with mustard sauce
And, I beg, at your next meal
Drink the little negro's health
Kept and fed by you
during the Commune.

"You might think I was writing verse.

C. Corot."

It is remarkable that Corot, with the affectionate disposition that this and other letters show, never married. He was entirely different from Thomas Carlyle (so "ill to bide wi'"), and his numerous friends, especially the young, were devoted to him. His unvarying disciple, Alfred Robaut, relates with many interesting details something of Corot's life at Douai about this time. Besides continually working during the day at painting or drawing, he was in the habit of rising at an early hour. During moments of leisure he would read Epictetus' "Hand Book," with its "hatred of evil and love of good," and Thomas à Kempis' "Imitation of Christ." In the evenings he would play lotto with the family and trente-et-un, and he was always fond of music. Once when he was standing at his easel young Robaut was near by humming a tune. After a while Corot, listening to the sound, remarked that the air seemed to resemble his landscape.

Corot frequently attended concerts, and sometimes in the evenings, after dinner, and while the party still lingered at the table, he would break out and sing "Les Amants de Touraine," "La Mère Jeanne," "Je sais attacher des Rubans," and he would partly act the pieces as he sang them, for he himself would have made an excellent actor. Corot also went fairly often to the theatre, and was always severe on any actor or actress who failed to hold the mirror up to nature. Like most other people, he was especially annoyed if, when the actor fell dead, he made the very slightest movement indicating life.

Newspapers Corot did not read very much, and, with so many artists, he was little or nothing of a politician. Republican he certainly was, but only in a distant kind of way. Someone said to him once, "How is it, Monsieur Corot, that you, who are revolutionary in art, are not also the same in politics?" To which he replied, "Oh, but that is not the same thing. I make my pictures according to my own fancy, and I do not impose on any one my manner of work. If I am wrong I do not compromise anyone but myself. I leave to others to follow in the way that pleases them best. Nature is there to guide them as she has guided me. If they choose to fall in behind me, that is their own look out."

COROT'S CHARITY TO POOR ARTISTS

Corot's charity was almost as boundless as his continued capacity for good painting, and many tales are told of how he helped poorer artists and their families. His benevolence, however, was not confined to those interested in his own affairs, but extended in various other ways, especially amongst children. One of the beautiful stories told of Corot's later life is connected with the Créche St. Marcel in the Rue Vandrezanne, near the Place d'Italie, in the south-east of Paris. On a certain stormy day one of the nuns of St. Vincent de Paul, Sister Maria by name, was allowed by the concierge to go up to the studio, and as the rain increased Corot prevailed upon the Sister to wait until the storm had passed over. When she left, after much interesting conversation, Corot gave her very graciously an invitation to return. Sister Maria did return, and she came back so often and was always so well received and rewarded, that Corot's charity became the main support of the créche. A photograph of the painter was hung over the little cradles in one of the rooms, as a chief benefactor of the Charity.

We now approach the period of Corot's illness and death, which took place early in 1875. There is, however, one event immediately preceding which requires particular attention. As has been already observed, Corot never attained to the "Médaille d'Honneur" of the Salon, although twice he came near receiving the great distinction from the hands of his fellow-artists. In 1874, when Corot was almost in his 80th year, and also within a year of his death, great efforts were made by his admirers to secure him this medal, the highest award of the artist's year in France. But the friends of a landscape artist had, at that time, practically no power against a figure painter, although things have been different in more recent years, when the veteran landscapist, Harpignies, was accorded the honour. Moreover, Corot's rival competitor, Gérôme, was a very wealthy and popular man. He was a careful outline draughtsman, and in many ways a good colourist, and he had been at the head of a great teaching school for many years. His pupils were by this time men who had reached the position of voters as exhibitors, and quite naturally they rallied round their own master on such an occasion. So Gérôme was chosen for the Medal of Honour and Corot was rejected. Gérôme and his party were certainly quite sincere in their belief that academical correctness of outline means good picture making; and Corot's greater sincerity in his interpretation of true form, tone and colour was of no avail in the conflict.

Degas relates that once he met Gérôme in the studio of Fremiet, and he chanced to make some remark expressing admiration for Corot's drawing. "Really," said Gérôme, "you find that this fellow knows how to draw trees?" "Certainly," replied Degas, "and I even consider him a still superior draughtsman of figures." At these words Gérôme began to laugh, and he turned away as if somehow he believed they were arrant humbug. It is only the

same kind of treatment that Whistler received in London, when Ruskin accused him of being a charlatan, and of throwing a pot of paint in the public's face and calling it a picture. Corot's friends were fiercely indignant at the rejection of their hero, and they immediately set about raising a subscription, and a very ready response being forthcoming, Corot was presented with a gold "Médaille d'Honneur" in the July preceding his death.

Up to the end of 1874 Corot remained in something of his usual good health, and it was not until the end of January 1875 that the malady of which he died—dropsy—attacked him seriously. During the month of February the artist's health became rapidly worse, and on the evening of the 22nd he died, fortified in his last moments by the rites of the Church.

After a funeral which became almost a public function, Corot was buried in Père la Chaise, and there has since been set up a little monument, with a bust. Close by, about three years later, Corot's lifelong friend, Daubigny, was also interred.

At Ville d'Avray another monument was erected in 1881, with a head in bas relief, by Geoffrey Dechaume, who had executed the gold medal given to Corot in 1874. This monument is set among the trees and amid the surroundings that the artist immortalised, but it may be said that the scenery itself is indeed Corot's best monument, and it is his favourite interpretation of the locality which will continue to live.

A NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

Accompanying each plate illustrating "The Landscapes of Corot" will be found a short account of the subject. In most cases these notes will prove sufficient to explain the chief points of interest in connection with the picture—the owner, the size of the original, provenance, and some idea of the date when Corot completed the painting. A certain number of these pictures will be familiar to the connoisseur of Corot, and even as regards those which are well-known, in so far as they belong to public galleries in France or Great Britain, there is a certain advantage in possessing together in one volume such notable examples of the artist's work reproduced in tone and colour. In addition to these, however, there are included twelve pictures from private collections in England, Scotland, and France, some of which have never been publicly exhibited, and not one has ever been reproduced before.

It is not pretended that the works chosen for reproduction by any means exhaust the treasures in Corot's art in these countries, yet they are confidently set forth as fair specimens of the master's work; and while other examples may readily be found, no better pictures by Corot than these are in existence. Many people have wished to possess really favourable examples of the art of Corot, as the great artist about whom so much has been written in the last two decades. Being produced in colour, these plates will, to some extent, assist in realising this wish.

D. CROAL THOMSON.

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The Editor desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to the various Owners who have kindly allowed their pictures to be reproduced in this volume. Their names are given under the titles. Also to Mr. Thos. Hunt, R.S.W., and Mr. E. A. Taylor for valuable assistance rendered in connection with the illustrations.

PLATE I.

LES DANSEURS DE CASTEL GANDOLFO.

FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION. OIL PAINTING, $25\frac{3}{8}'' \times 18\frac{7}{8}''$. FINISHED ABOUT 1860.

One of the pictures by Corot which, as explained in the text, appears to have been composed many years before it was completed. The artist's last visit to Italy was in 1843, and this canvas was not finished until nearly 1860. Castel Gandolfo has belonged to the Popes for three hundred years and stands on the shores of Lake Albano, a dozen miles southerly from Rome.

The special charm of this picture lies in the poetic rendering of evening light, in the delicacy of the sky, in the grace of the smaller trees, and in the exquisite harmony of the tones throughout a beautiful and reposeful composition.

This picture was in the Memorial Exhibition of Corot's works held in Paris in 1875, shortly after the artist's death.

PLATE II.

THE FISHERMAN'S HUT.

FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. OIL PAINTING, 18″ × 12½″.
PAINTED ABOUT 1870.

A picture painted in the full maturity of Corot's powers, and especially characteristic of his delicate work in tree painting. The feathery trees stand with peculiar grace against the sun-lit sky, they seem to shimmer in the gentle breeze, while their airiness permits the birds to fly through the waving branches.

The cottages and the fisherman occupy quite a subordinate part in the composition, which is almost entirely made up of the trees and sky, and it is the tenderness in tone and colour which makes the picture beautiful and attractive.

This picture was bequeathed by Mr. George Salting, who acquired it shortly before his death in 1910 from the once famous collection of Mr. Alexander Young.

COROT

PLATE III.

LA RAFALE : UN COUP DE VENT.

FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION. OIL PAINTING, $17\frac{3}{4}'' \times 14\frac{1}{2}''$. PAINTED ABOUT 1868.

This is one of the very best stormy pictures painted by Corot, and it is presented here in order to display the extent of the artist's power.

The wind whistles through the trees, and the group of them in the centre bends under the stormy blast. The whole picture is a whirl of wind and water, painted in a scheme of grays, the sky cloud-laden and the land wet with the rain that has fallen. A solitary piece of colour is reserved for the red cap of the storm-beaten passenger who bends her head and hurries on her way. The picture forms a striking contrast to *Les Danseurs de Castel Gandolfo.*

PLATE IV.

LE MOULIN DE SAINT-NICHOLAS-LEZ-ARRAS.

FROM THE CHAUCHARD COLLECTION IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, $32\frac{1}{4}'' \times 26''$.
PAINTED IN JULY 1874.

This is one of the very last pictures produced by Corot, and was painted when the artist was seventy-eight, and within seven months of his death. It is remarkable for the delicacy of the foliage, and for the graceful, nervous movement in the lines of the slender tree trunks and branches.

The picture expresses no composition aiming at an attractive arrangement of the subject, but only an acceptance of the scene as it happened to come, and this perhaps leaves something to be desired.

The picture was painted near the town of Arras (half-way between Lille and Amiens, in the north of France), famous in the middle-ages for its tapestry. Corot went there frequently during his later years, and here his friend, M. Alfred Robaut, resided. This devoted admirer of the artist was the first owner of the picture.

It is recorded that this canvas was painted in three morning sittings.

COROT

PLATE V.

LES ÉTANGS DE VILLE D'AVRAY.

FROM THE MUSÉE DE ROUEN. OIL PAINTING, 61″×39½″. PAINTED IN 1867-8.

One of the pictures by Corot which has had a considerable influence on the disciples of the painter, for his followers have found the approach to *plein-air* treatment therein very acceptable to twentieth-century ideas. The pools at Ville d'Avray and the surrounding landscape frequently formed the subjects of Corot's pictures, and the houses of the hamlet are visible through the trees.

It is curious that the inclination towards blue in the trees to the right makes the picture specially admired in France, for the tones in the natural landscape there are always more blue than in England, where a warmer colour is usually seen.

This picture was exhibited in the Salon of 1868 and at the Corot Memorial Exhibitions held in Paris in 1875 and 1895.

PLATE VI.

PAYSAGE: SOUVENIR DE MORTEFONTAINE.

FROM THE LOUVRE, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, $34\frac{1}{2}'' \times 25\frac{1}{4}''$. PAINTED IN 1864.

One of the most beautiful of Corot's pictures and a masterpiece of the first order. It was purchased by the State, from the Salon, in 1864, and was placed for twenty-five years in the Palace of Fontainebleau. In 1889 it was transferred to the Louvre, and it was the first really great picture by Corot exhibited in a public museum in Paris. It was soon after the acquisition of this work by the Government that Corot was promoted to be an officer of the Legion of Honour, and this was accorded to him, in face of severe official opposition, on the personal initiation of Napoleon III. The Emperor, be it said to his honour, always admired Corot's pictures, and several times purchased examples for his private apartments.

The picture presents one of the most characteristic subjects of the painter, and one that has materially helped to make his reputation for mastery of light and tone. The delicate foliage shows itself against the atmosphere hanging over the lake with almost magical effect, and the bountiful air of Heaven is perceptible throughout the whole canvas.

At Mortefontaine, twenty miles to the north-east of Paris, there is a Napoleonic château and a semi-public park.

COROT

PLATE VII.

LES BORDS DU GRAND LAC DE VILLE D'AVRAY.

FROM THE MUSÉE DE ROUEN. OIL PAINTING, 32″×17″. PAINTED IN 1872-3.

A picture which has been received into great popular favour through various reproductions in monochrome. This reproduction in colour, however, reveals beauties in its composition which black-and-white cannot reach. In the picture the houses of Ville d'Avray, where the painter spent so many years of his life, are visible, buried amongst trees.

Following the ideas of many pictures by Corot, a birch tree forms one of the great attractions of the composition ; and the lightness and grace, so often found in the master's finest pieces, are here exhibited to much advantage.

When the picture was first painted on the canvas the trees to the right were rendered in a somewhat heavy manner, and the background was higher and darker in colour. During the winter of 1872-3 Corot, in his studio in Paris, worked much on the picture, modifying the heaviness and introducing light and air into it in the most successful way. There is a richness in the colour which is unusual in Corot's work.

PLATE VIII.

LE BOITEUX.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF GEO. N. STEVENS, ESQ. OIL PAINTING, 23″ × 17½″.
PAINTED ABOUT 1860.

Possessing all the characteristics of Corot's painting, the softened foliage, the delicate stems and branches, the delightfully indefinite foreground with the goats and the figure crowned with a red cap, this picture is one of the earlier examples of the artist's finest phase of landscape painting. The tender qualities of the tones are not easily describable, and the picture requires to be looked at several times before it is correctly understood. But it is one to dream over, and every time it is examined some new quality will reveal itself.

PLATE IX.

JOINVILLE-SUR-MARNE.

FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION. OIL PAINTING, 12½″×9½″. PAINTED ABOUT 1865.

For its size this is one of the most charming of the pictures by Corot. It may be noted that the canvas is only a little larger than our plate, and it will be remarked that the reproduction itself is one of the most technically perfect of the series. The texture of the canvas and of the paint can almost be seen, while the rendering of the birch tree against the sky is a triumph of restraint in the art of printing.

The original is often quoted as being one of the most expensive pictures for its size sold at auction. For many years it was one of the gems of the collection of the late Mr. Alexander Young, and it still remains in this country.

PLATE X.

GATHERING PRIMROSES.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF JOHN KIRKHOPE, ESQ. OIL PAINTING, 18″ × 10½″.
PAINTED ABOUT 1860.

The freshness of this picture is unusual with Corot, and it is a canvas which has been painted altogether out-of-doors. As a rule Corot liked to work over his canvases in his studio, and perhaps the foliage of the trees has had more than one painting, but the landscape otherwise, and the sky, bear evidence of little manipulation. Probably the artist found them so excellent that he never sought to retouch them.

The figure gathering primroses is introduced chiefly to give the note of red of which Corot was so fond, and the distant animals should be accepted as spots of colour only, and not minutely studied.

COROT

PLATE XI.

L'ÉTANG—SOUVENIR DES MARAIS DU BEAUVAISES.

FROM THE THOMY THIÉRY COLLECTION IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, $35\frac{1}{2}'' \times 28\frac{1}{4}''$.
PAINTED IN 1868-9.

A very full and richly-coloured picture, and painted altogether in a stronger manner than the one usually adopted by Corot. The tall trees, polled of all their lower branches in a typical French way, rise nearly to the top of the canvas, moving in the light evening breeze. The day has been warm and the animals still stand in the pond awaiting the call of the red-capped shepherd who lingers on the bank. The early days of autumn have begun, and the brown tones have touched with warmth the foliage and the under-growth. This is accentuated by the colour of the cows, and echoed in the water, while in the same harmony are the warm tones of the sky and clouds.

Beauvais is in the north from Paris, half-way to Dieppe, in a part of France famous for its tapestries and Huguenots.

COROT.

PLATE XII.

PASTORALE—SOUVENIR D'ITALIE.

FROM THE GIFT OF THE SONS OF JAMES REID OF AUCHTERARDER, IN THE CORPORATION GALLERIES, GLASGOW. OIL PAINTING, 67″×56″. PAINTED IN 1873.

This is one of the best pictures Corot ever painted, one of the most complete, the most characteristic, and one of the most beautiful. It combines everything the artist essayed to portray in his long career—feathery trees, dancing figures, a glimpse of water, and a lovely sky. All are achieved with a mastery, and at the same time with a skilful charm, that touches the highest point Corot's art could reach.

The painter is here seen in his happiest mood; the whole picture sings together, not so much because the nymphs and fauns dance and play, but because the sun begins to gild the sky, the trees rustle in the morning breeze, and the dew still lingers on the flowers spread over the verdant ground; the birds certainly chirrup among the leaves, and all indeed is "right with the world." Such a picture, as Whistler would have said, should be received in silence, the silence of thankfulness and delight that so noble a work is possible to be created by humanity.

For many years this great picture was in the possession of Mr. J. Forbes White, of Aberdeen, one of the first Scotsmen to appreciate the genius of Corot.

PLATE XIII.

THE WILLOW-BANK (SAULAIE À LA POINTE D'UN MARAIS).

FROM THE THOMY THIÉRY COLLECTION IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, 20″ × 12¾″.
PAINTED BETWEEN 1865 AND 1870.

This little picture scintillates with tones of grey-green, which are sometimes so vivid as scarcely to be held in check even by the brilliant red of the peasant's dress. The willows on the edge of a marsh are eminently characteristic of Corot's work of this period, and at all times during his life he was fond of painting their delicate branches, surmounting the deep-toned trunks beneath. The beauty of the sky should be observed, with its fleecy clouds floating in the tenderly-expressed atmosphere.

PLATE XIV.

THE RIVER MEADOWS.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF SIR THOMAS GLEN-COATS, BART. OIL PAINTING, 23″×16″.
PAINTED ABOUT 1866.

One of the quietly gracious paintings by Corot which are so acceptable in a house where culture has touched everything into tuneful completeness. In the picture the river has spread itself out in shallow waters on the level lands between the distant rising grounds, and even towards the end of summer the moisture has kept the verdure green. On the Oise and on the Marne there are many meadow-lands like these, rich, verdant, and full of peace and promise to their indwellers.

Corot was, like Turner, a great sky-painter, and the genial warmth of the atmosphere, wherein the clouds so complaisantly float, forms an adequate back-ground to the pleasant fields and waters below. The great clump of tall trees is buttressed by slender treelets, with foliage indicated in the truly Corot style.

PLATE XV.

THE BENT TREE.

FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON. OIL PAINTING, 23½″ × 19″.
PAINTED BETWEEN 1865 AND 1870.

The Bent Tree is one of the most interesting of Corot's works and bears the imprint of his personality in painting very markedly. It was painted at Ville d'Avray during the last ten years of the artist's life, but there is no record of the exact time, nor of the circumstances of a repetition (with variations) being prepared. These variations exist throughout the entire composition, showing that although the general effect is similar the pictures are absolutely independent pieces. This matter is discussed on pages four and five of this monograph, and the varied experiences of the companion canvas now at Melbourne are there described.

The picture in the London Gallery is heavier in colour than the one in Melbourne, and it is remarkable how it changes in aspect under the variations of light in the English climate, some days appearing almost black in the shadows, and at other times grey and cool like the masterpiece in Australia. It was bequeathed to the National Gallery, London, by Mr. George Salting.

PLATE XVI.

THE BIRD-NESTERS (LES PETITS DÉNICHEURS).

FROM THE COLLECTION OF M. LÉONARD TAUBER, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, $35\frac{1}{2}'' \times 25\frac{1}{2}''$.
PAINTED IN 1873-4.

This picture is famous, not only because of its supreme beauty in colour, in arrangement and in subject, but chiefly because these qualities have raised it to the highest pinnacle of auction fame. On June 3rd, 1910, at Christie's rooms in London, this canvas realised £13,650, or more than double the largest sum paid at the Alexander Young sale at the end of the same month. It was for many years in the collection of Mr. Andrew Maxwell, of Glasgow, and it is now in an equally famous gallery of a comparatively young collector in Paris, M. Léonard Tauber. This enlightened connoisseur has given every facility for the reproduction of this beautiful work, and special thanks are due to him for his courtesy, through which so many admirers of Corot share in appreciating this remarkable picture.

PLATE XVII.

THE CRAY-FISHER (PECHEUR D'ÉCREVISSE).

FROM THE JAMES DONALD COLLECTION IN THE CORPORATION GALLERIES, GLASGOW.
OIL PAINTING, 40″ × 30″. PAINTED ABOUT 1860.

This is another of the treasures of the Glasgow Gallery, and although it is neither so complete nor so large as the *Pastorale* (Plate XII.), it is a fine example of the early development of Corot's most remarkable phase.

This picture was particularly admired by R. A. M. Stevenson who once wrote of it as "this tower of foliage which fills the canvas with a decorative mass of quivering atmospheric colour infinitely varied, yet kept in the most solemn and imposing unity of plane and effect. The grey distance, like a moment prepared-for in music, and foreshadowed by progressions, steals upon you by imperceptible gradations full of unfolded mystery. The grass at your feet, with a rare and deftly touched flower, and a flicker or two of light on some pointed spear of reed or leaf, attains the perfection of easy finish." This work is carried to completeness as far as the master desired, and therein it differs from the more rapidly painted *Wood-Cutters* (Plate XVIII.) from the same collection.

PLATE XVIII.

THE WOOD-CUTTERS.

FROM THE JAMES DONALD COLLECTION IN THE CORPORATION GALLERIES, GLASGOW.
OIL PAINTING, 25″ × 18½″ PAINTED BETWEEN 1865 AND 1870.

This is a very rapidly painted picture, probably produced in a few summer mornings out-of-doors, and very little touched afterwards in the studio. It is more dashing in character, and less precise in completion, than is usual in Corot's work, the trees to the left being practically unfinished. The freshness of the direct study from nature is perceptible throughout the canvas, and the spontaneity of the painting provides a charm which renders it interesting and instructive.

This picture, formerly in the Hoschede Collection, was for many years in the possession of the late Mr. James Donald, of Glasgow, who left it, and a whole group of fine contemporary pictures, to the Glasgow Gallery in 1906.

COROT

PLATE XIX.

LA DANSE DES NYMPHES.

FROM THE CHAUCHARD COLLECTION IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, 31″ × 19½″.
PAINTED ABOUT 1860.

This is one of the few subjects of which Corot painted several replicas, and although they are so termed, they are not replicas in the sense of being copies, for all vary in important particulars. For example, the picture most like this one is the still more celebrated *Danse des Nymphes* now in the Louvre (No. 138), a composition completed in 1850, and hung in the Luxembourg from 1855 to 1887. But our picture is very much smaller in size, and it is reversed. Moreover, in no single detail can absolute identity be traced between the two works—in the figures, tree-trunks, or colour; and yet the general aspect is so similar that there are few people but would declare them to be the same. Two other pictures by Corot with this title are different in size, and painted on much squarer canvases.

It is not recorded when this version of the subject left the artist's easel, but it was painted about a dozen years later than the larger picture, while it is very much warmer throughout in colour, and generally more freely painted. It was in the Paris Salon of 1861, and in the Exposition Centennale of 1889, where the selection was somewhat severe.

PLATE XX.

MORNING—LA CLAIRIÈRE AU LEVER DU JOUR.

FROM THE CHAUCHARD COLLECTION IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, $29\frac{1}{2}'' \times 24''$.
PAINTED BETWEEN 1865 AND 1867.

A picture which has the distinction of being different in general arrangement from almost all others by Corot, while at the same time possessing his chief characteristics of tree-painting. The composition might be the work of Theodore Rousseau, the Barbizon painter with the strongest force of will, while the rendering of the foliage is Corotesque in all its qualities of lightness and grace.

The morning sun struggles with the rising mists of the earth and has already begun to pierce the clouds; the shadows of the tree-trunks indicate the position of the god of light, but the trees, notwithstanding their apparently thin tracery, veil its strengthening rays. The lake still shimmers with the moving atmosphere, and the distance is only vaguely suggested. The peasant mother and child have begun their early labours, while the ground around glistens as the sunlight catches the dewy leaves. This is a picture which seems rather to evade being found interesting, and at first it often successfully conceals its beauty; but a little patience and a little thought will soon unveil all its delightful charms.

PLATE XXI.

SOUVENIR D'ITALIE: CASTEL GANDOLFO.

FROM THE LOUVRE, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, 32″ × 25½″.
COMPLETED BETWEEN 1865 AND 1868.

One of the numerous pictures begun in the comparatively early life of Corot, but not finished until many years afterwards. Probably it was first arranged by the artist at the same time as *Les Danseurs de Castel Gandolfo* (Plate I.), and it is known not to have been completed until about 1868. It was the second great work by Corot to be added to the Louvre, being left to that Gallery by M. Henri Lallemand, in 1892. The first was the *Souvenir de Mortefontaine* (Plate VI.), and this fine picture is a worthy pendant to that splendid canvas.

The brilliant light of the evening sky forms a radiant background for the massive trees, and for the terrace darkening under the approaching twilight. The goatherd pipes a symphony which can almost be heard in the quietude and serenity that pervades the scene, while his goats gambol under the shadows of the trees. A fallen tree-trunk lies right across the foreground where the flowers and shrubs clamber luxuriantly.

PLATE XXII.

LE PASSEUR.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF M. EDOUARD MARTELL, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, 53″×42″.
PAINTED IN 1873.

Le Passeur is a souvenir of a *motif* noted by Corot in the environs of Montfermiel, Montier, near Joinville-sur-Marne (where he also painted), although it has also been called *Batelier sur lac de Nemi.* This picture was exhibited in the Paris Salon in 1873, the same year that the *Pastorale*, now in Glasgow, was shown. The latter great masterpiece is reproduced here (Plate XII.), and it will be interesting to the connoisseur to consider the two works together. It is very difficult to believe that *Le Passeur* is not at least twenty years older than the *Pastorale.*

This picture, a very beautiful one, is almost certainly a composition arranged in Corot's earlier life, and only completed for exhibition purposes in 1873, within a couple of years of the artist's death.

PLATE XXIII.

VILLAGERS IN THE VALLEY.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF A. FORRESTER-PATON, ESQ. OIL PAINTING, $25\frac{1}{2}'' \times 18\frac{1}{2}''$.
PAINTED ABOUT 1870.

This picture, so simple in its subject yet so charming in its painting, was one that Corot kept by him in his studio. Although it was undoubtedly a work of an earlier period, it was in the painter's rooms in January 1872, when his friend Robaut made a little sketch memorandum of it for the collection since published. Afterwards the picture was exhibited at the *Exposition des Maitres du Siècle*, held in Paris in 1886, and it was in the Saulnier Collection at that time.

The reproduction of the picture is one of the most successful of the series, and the touch of the artist can be readily followed. Especially fine is the deep-toned colouring of the foliage, with all its subtle variations.

COROT

PLATE XXIV.

THE WALK BY THE LAKE: VILLE D'AVRAY.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF M. WILLY BLUMENTHAL, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, $24\frac{1}{2}'' \times 20\frac{1}{2}''$.
PAINTED IN MAY 1872.

This is another of the many subjects Corot found near his summer home at Ville d'Avray. It is simply the walk round the lake there, and indications of the village can be seen in the background. An autumnal glow pervades the scene, while the painting of the branches and leaves is eminently characteristic of the master. It is noticeable also that there are more figures than Corot usually introduced into his ordinary compositions, and they are so lightly touched that they fall into the arrangement of the picture in a very acceptable way.

The artist sold this painting in 1872 to M. O'doard, from whose possession it passed into the present collection.

COROT

PLATE XXV.

NYMPHE DÉSARMANT L'AMOUR.

FROM THE CHAUCHARD COLLECTION IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS.
OIL PAINTING, 30″×26″. PAINTED IN 1857.

The figures in this picture are considerably more prominent than in any of the others we reproduce, and make the work almost as much of a figure-piece as a landscape. The picture was exhibited first in the Paris Salon of 1857, the same year as J. F. Millet's *Gleaners* was hung.

A pretty story is told in connection with a small study Corot made of the same subject very soon afterwards. In this reduction, at the upper part of the canvas, a little bird is visible on a tree branch. This bird was added by Corot after the picture was completed, and he made this addition in the house of the purchaser. Looking attentively at his work Corot said, "There is still something wanting. In all love stories there is always a little bird. We must not forget this little bird," and with a touch of his brush his nightingale was perched amongst the foliage.

PLATE XXVI.

THE BOATMAN (SOUVENIR DE LECLUZE), NEAR DOUAI.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE HONBLE. MRS. DENISON. OIL PAINTING, $21\frac{1}{4}'' \times 16''$.
PAINTED ABOUT 1868.

This is one of the brightest of the smaller pictures by Corot, being more elaborate and careful in composition, as well as gayer in colour, than was usual with the artist. One feels in looking at the picture that the painter was particularly cheerful when he arranged it, and that this happiness was maintained all through the time he was working on the canvas. One can easily imagine the old painter smiling as he painted the sky, singing aloud (as he often did) when he touched-in the red roofs and the cow, then breaking into a low laugh as he gave the boatman his red cap, and as he accentuated the lights on the birch trees on the river bank. The carefulness in the arrangement of this picture may be contrasted with the want of any attempt at composition as shown in *La Route d'Arras* (Plate XXX.).

This picture, like the other from the same Collection (Plate XXVIII.), has never been exhibited. In 1880 it was, however, in the possession of Alexandre Dumas.

PLATE XXVII.

UNE SOIRÉE.

FROM THE CHAUCHARD COLLECTION IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, $28\frac{3}{4}'' \times 20\frac{1}{2}''$.
PAINTED IN 1855.

This is the earliest picture in the series here reproduced, and something of the quaint, tentative quality of Corot's earlier work is perceptible in the painting. Although this is designated an example in the artist's earlier manner, it should be noted that Corot was sixty when he painted it.

The placidness suggested by the composition is in striking contrast to *L'Ouragan* (Plate XXIX.), where the whole forces of nature seem about to break loose. In this quiet *Soirée* the calmness can almost be felt, the stillness of the evening is evident in the sky, the lake, and the foliage. The fisherman in the boat only moves languidly, and the cow appears as if it would remain at rest for ever. The serenity of Evening has never been more completely produced in paint.

PLATE XXVIII.

LAGO DI GARDA: CHEVRIÈRE AU BORD DE L'EAU.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE HONBLE. MRS. DENISON. OIL PAINTING, $32'' \times 25\frac{3}{4}''$. PAINTED BETWEEN 1865 AND 1870.

This picture of the goat-herd at the side of the Lago di Garda is one of the most carefully completed of Corot's landscapes. From the composition it can be gathered that the work was begun in the artist's earlier days, probably about the date of his last visit to Italy—1843. But the completion was only carried through about twenty-five years later. The sky and distance, so tenderly suggested (as indeed to be, as it were, blown on to the canvas), form the great charm of the picture.

The arrangement of the trees, heavy foliage at one side and tree trunks on the other, with only a few leaves thereon, is one that is found in many of Corot's canvases. This picture is in every way characteristic of the best side of Corot's art, and as it has never been publicly exhibited it is practically unknown, even to the connoisseur.

PLATE XXIX.

L'OURAGAN.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF CHARLES ROBERTS, ESQ. OIL PAINTING, 27½″ × 19½″.
PAINTED ABOUT 1872.

This representation of the beginnings of a violent storm is one of the strongest pieces of colour painted by Corot. There is nothing quite like it of this quality in the whole range of his art. The mutterings of the coming tempest can be felt in the swing of the branches; and a stormy night is foreboded by the gathering clouds. The picture appears to have been a work of great rapidity, the painter racing, as it were, to set down without delay the quickly-changing effects.

This remarkable work is perhaps more of an artist's picture than any other in our collection; that is a canvas showing the technical mastery Corot possessed over his material, and the freedom and unerring judgment with which he worked when he was unusually absorbed in his subject.

This picture, formerly in the collection of M. Coquelin, the French actor, has for many years been one of the principal pieces in a remarkable collection of Barbizon pictures in Yorkshire.

PLATE XXX.

LA ROUTE D'ARRAS—VILLAGE OF SIN-LE-NOBLE, NEAR DOUAI.

FROM THE THOMY THIÉRY COLLECTION IN THE LOUVRE, PARIS. OIL PAINTING, $32'' \times 23\frac{3}{4}''$. PAINTED IN 1873.

This picture, painted in the village whose name has so odd and paradoxical a look to the English, is a most faithful transcript of the actual scene, and this topographical feature, in Corot's later years, was unusual. The only addition the painter made was the broken tree to the left, where the composition appeared somewhat vacant. The picture is remarkable in arrangement, one side being filled up while the other is left very open.

A story is told that while Corot was painting on this canvas he thought he would play a little trick on the mob of peasants who always troubled him in the morning on their way to market. It was a half-holiday, and in the afternoon a balloonist was to make an ascent, and all the country-side hurried through the morning marketing to have time to see the balloon go up. Corot hearing this, sketched lightly on his canvas a balloon in mid-air, and when the peasants passed him on their way from market, they looked at the picture and made comments as usual. Seeing the balloon they fell easily into the little trap, and they thought the time of the ascent had been altered. The painter chuckled as he believed he had got even with his tormentors, for they were loud in their expressions of disappointment.

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